1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52

CHAPTER XVIII

WEALTH

THE examination of the problem of labour may be fittingly concluded with a discussion of the role played by wealth, free capital, in Nupe economy. It is in keeping with Nupe production in general, with its emphasis on individual property and money profits, that the concept of wealth should be clearly pronounced. The principle of accumulation of wealth as free capital pervades Nupe economics and, in particular, serves to define the economic (and, indirectly, social) stratification of the society.

MONEY CAPITAL

The appreciation of wealth figures prominently in the educational conceptions of the people. Young boys of 8 or 10, when they are given a separate *bucá* plot to farm, are at the same time taught the value of money income and money capital. Mothers will help them to market their small produce for money, or will buy their produce directly from them. And fathers and mothers, as we have seen, equip their children with a first diminutive working capital, a penny or two, to start a profitable trade (see pp. 286–7, 331). These profits enable boys and girls to defray the expenses of the social obligations incumbent upon this tender age, namely, contributions to the costs of the age-grade associations of which they are members. Money expenses, partly involving the accumulation of reserves, accompany Nupe men and women all through their lives: money to meet the costs of kinship rituals—birth, weddings, and funerals—money for the maintenance of labour, the purchase of tools, &c., or for personal wants and the luxuries of life. Money also frequently forms part of the inheritance left by men or women.

Farm produce or gifts in kind in general cannot fully replace money expenditure. This is shown clearly in the nature of the universal gift in Nupe—kola-nuts. Gifts of kola-nuts are more or less regularly exchanged between friends and relations; a gift of kola-nuts serves as the traditional announcement, and invitation at the same time, extended to kinsfolk at the occasion of forthcoming kinship ceremonies. Gifts of kola-nuts also represent the traditional expression of political allegiance. And, with the insignificant exception of the kola-nut growers, the donor of the gift has to buy the kola-nuts on the market for money. The largest single expenditure of Nupe economy, finally, bride-price, is paid entirely in money (see the discussion of bride-price in Chap. XX). It involves, moreover, accumulation of money reserve, or, if the bride-price is paid in instalments, as it frequently is, careful planning of money expenditure over a considerable period.

Although none of the larger forms of traditional money expenditure were ever replaceable by gifts or contributions in kind, it is also true that the practice of money expenditure has been increasing with the spreading of cultural influences from the town. It is natural that Bida society,

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52

halving the costs of the festivity. In many essentially pagan villages Mohammedan burials are now becoming the fashion partly because, as I have reasons to believe, they are cheaper than the more elaborate pagan funeral feasts. Are then traditional customs such weak incentives, and regarded as of so little importance, that they are easily modified and even abandoned? Or shall we interpret this lack of appreciation as being due to an eminently reasonable attitude of the Nupe peasant? The answer is that the Nupe peasant or craftsman has little or no alternative choice. He is faced with two rigid, inescapable, demands which, between them, eliminate nearly all freedom of choice: one is maintenance of labour, involving food-supplies, clothing, and, to some extent at least, payment of bride-price for the labour-group on the co-operation of which the livelihood of the family depends; the other, even more rigid, demand is tax. The surrender of all these cultural wants is a result, not of 'reasonableness' or free choice, but essentially of external pressure.[1] That they still represent valid 'values', capable of determining social behaviour, is shown in that radical solution to secure their satisfaction individually if it proved impossible to secure them for the whole group, even at the risk of destroying the labour-unit.

The part played by tax in this failure of the Nupe household to adjust itself to the various cultural requirements was shown clearly in our analysis of the household budgets. We have seen that the balance could be maintained without difficulty only where a home industry (which, as we have seen, is carried out as individual work) could be relied on as a subsidiary means of the family income. Administrative Officers are well aware of this fact. Indeed, some are of the opinion that additional handicrafts or similar occupations, for example, work as temporary labourers, should be encouraged as a means of procuring money for tax without deranging the general scheme of household economy. Two Administrative Officers, of long experience, have pointed out to me that among the Hausa it is an established custom for young peasants to travel during the dry season and seek work of this kind, which would later enable them to pay their tax without difficulty. I am not qualified to discuss the fiscal implications of such a policy. But I may be allowed to point out its probable sociological and psychological effects, namely, that the encouragement of temporary labour of individuals must further, and indeed favour, that break-up of the labour- and family-unit the beginnings of which are already visible.

STANDARDS OF LIVING: STATUS AND PRESTIGE

We turn to the highest standard of living, that accepted by the upper classes of Nupe. Their needs and demands, the 'things they do' with their wealth, can again be grouped under the three headings which

[1] It must be said that certain Administrative Officers regard native festivities which fall in the time when tax is being collected as definitely conflicting with the prompt payment of tax. I have already mentioned (see p. 64) that in Bida Emirate all festivities (which, incidentally, happened to include certain harvest and fertility rites) were forbidden for a certain period until tax arrears had been paid.

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52

511 556 characterize the standards of living of the lower social strata—with their meaning significantly altered. For 'maintenance of labour' read increase of capital and wealth; for 'demands of the community' dictates of status and prestige. The latter pervade the whole field of expenditure. Expenditure of wealth in any form, whatever its primary and avowed purpose, represents expenditure for the sake of status and prestige at the same time.

Investment of capital in human labour—slaves, pawns, or clients—also enhances the prestige of the man who can afford such investment and the life of leisure which it entails. The lavish scale of kinship feasts similarly reflects social status. Presents on a generous scale, to the king or influential noblemen, or liberal hospitality as befits the man of substance, are at the same time practical means of winning the favour of social superiors and securing a reliable political following. In the house of a Bida nobleman of moderately high standing, for example, six *bara* who lived with him, and five *bara* who lived outside, in their own houses, were daily guests at at least one meal—a hospitality which very nearly doubled household expenses.[1]

511 554 596 In a society in which marriage is by bride-price, and by high bride-price at that, the marriage arrangements must also become an index of wealth and status. Wealth and status are infallibly reflected in the number of wives a man possesses. We have seen that, while small peasants or small craftsmen and traders are content with one or two wives, no Bida man of standing would have less than four, and many even considerably more (whether legitimate wives or concubines). We will not exaggerate the share of prestige and status in this 'investment': the practice in the houses of the nobility to 'pension off' ageing wives and replace them by young attractive girls shows the contribution of more concrete motives also. On the other hand, wealthy Bida families will pride themselves in marrying off their sons at an early age, four to five years before they reach what is normally regarded as marriageable age. This is clearly done for the sake of prestige of the parents rather than for the benefit of the boy-husband, who, for example, may still be a pupil in the Government school (I have known of two such).

511 554 565 484 This twofold significance of economic incentives among the *élite* of Nupe society is no less clearly pronounced in expenditure of a more personal nature. 'Clothes make the man' in Nupe as elsewhere; in the possession of arms one sees not only fighting equipment, and in the possession of a horse not only a means of transport, but symbols of rank and status. I will conclude this list with the description of one cultural incentive which carries the concept of status and prestige into a rather remote domain of social life—travelling. Travelling forms indeed part of the life of the Nupe gentleman, and the young men of the higher nobility, especially the princes of the royal house, are sent, like their brothers in Victorian England, on a traditional Grand Tour. It takes them through the northern Emirates, to the cities and courts of famous

[1] The total consumption at the midday meal was approximately 5 lb. of porridge, made with fish and palm-oil sauce. The share of the family, including the family head, his wives, and his children, was 3 lb., that of the *bara* 2 lb.

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52

respects: not only in the productive arrangements which, in these circumstances, would no longer supply the ritual beverage as a matter of course, but also in the psychological attitude, which would have to admit a ritual beverage largely emptied of what Radcliffe-Brown calls 'social value', i.e. which would be nothing but a ritual beverage, completely removed from the habits of ordinary life. The village dance, again, is an expression of group co-operation and coactivity in the recreational sphere. Like the traditional occasions themselves on which it is performed—kinship feasts, *egbe* work, religious ceremonies, and so forth—the dance mobilizes and intensifies group sentiments. We might even go so far as to say that the unitary nature of the group which is thus mobilized forbids a division into neutral performer and aloof lookers-on. The correlation between professionalized performance and differentiation within the group is indeed clearly visible in Bida. An aloof aesthetic appreciation of professional dancers and musicians appears to represent the only form of entertainment acceptable to a society in which class prejudices and motives of status and prestige dominate all gatherings and festivities. Class prejudice has fostered a conception of dignity set against public exhibitions of this kind. The explanation is, I believe, that it would obliterate, even though only temporarily, the demarcation of rank and status. It is, in fact, quite inconceivable for a man of status to join in a dance, even in his own house, for example, at a family feast—to dance, that is, together with, and in front of, people who must inevitably include persons of lesser station. Yet in the villages old men, even titled elders, commonly join in the dances of the younger folk, without danger to their dignity. To assimilate, then, the village dance to the performances which appeal to the 'sophisticated' people of Bida would mean assimilating the complete social organization.

For the sake of the theoretical argument I have stated the case of this negative form of culture contact a little more strongly than is warranted by actual conditions. Throughout this book we have found evidence of the gradual closing of the rift, and of the advancing assimilation even in these domains of culture. But indeed our argument is supported by this development. For the assimilation does not advance by the narrow channels of confined, specific, cultural changes. Rather these changes are carried by the tide of a far-reaching cultural adjustment which is transforming the whole productive system and the organization of labour as well as the social life at large in the Nupe village. The breaking up of the family labour-unit, and the appearance, in the country, of professional Bida musicians as spokesmen of what I have called the 'propaganda for the kingdom', are two convincing instances.

WEALTH AND STATUS

Hitherto we have been using the terms 'status' and 'prestige' as meaning one and the same thing. It becomes important now to distinguish between them. By 'status' we understand a more or less fixed place on the social ladder; 'prestige' represents a more fluid form of social recognition, gained by certain services or deeds in accordance with the

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52

accepted code of society. Status in Nupe is determined by descent or formal promotion to rank and office. One of the accepted and most important means by which prestige can be gained is wealth. This raises the question of the closeness of the relation between status, and prestige gained through wealth. In other words, we must ask to what extent prestige gained through wealth tends to facilitate the attainment of status, and may even come to be regarded as its equivalent, or, conversely, to what extent high social status can be reached and maintained without adequate financial support.

Under traditional conditions social status and wealth could hardly become separated as political rank implied far-reaching economic privileges—the acquisition of fiefs and land, the chances of booty, profits from slave-trade, and so forth. Even assuming that considerable wealth could be accumulated also by groups outside the recognized social *élite*, such as traders and craftsmen, it is clear that their highest income could not rival the resources vested in a privileged political position. In present-day Nupe traditional political ranks and wealth are no longer inseparably linked. High social status does not invariably guarantee the demands of prestige also. The members of the *élite*, no longer in a position to combine the satisfaction of the more concrete wants with that of the demands of prestige, will have to choose between the different forms of expenditure. Yet here we find, rather surprisingly, that the expenses for the sake of prestige can be very considerably reduced without affecting the conception of status. The fixed symbols of status, the glazed turban and the silver sword, are either comparatively cheap or are heirlooms. The house, also inherited, may have to be left in disrepair; but its lay-out would still betray the status of its owner. Polygamy can be maintained to a certain extent thanks to the practice of marriage in the family, with low bride-price, which is customary among the *élite*. Horses, new dresses, ornaments, lavish hospitality—they all have to go. But travelling and leisure need not disappear. The former is satisfied by claiming hospitality from relatives or friends in distant parts, or even from social inferiors, who would not think of refusing such flattering requests. The latter manifests itself in the choice of profession of impecunious noblemen: very few have taken to farming or tried to learn a craft; theirs are mostly the unskilled 'free' professions of the leisured class. Thus even on the decline, the social *élite* secures the satisfaction of certain wants which to the lower orders of the society are permanently unattainable. Nupe society built up a strong defence of the prerogatives of status in the form of class-obligations and the utilization of inheritance. With its help the social *élite* of the country can hope to weather at least temporary difficulties and set-backs.

That this defence of class prerogatives has not yet lost its strength is evident in the hesitant attitude of the people towards accepting the new evaluation of wealth as independent of traditional status. The issue is by no means clear; it is confused by various concomitant factors, specially by the introduction of the new official ranks and positions under the N.A. some of which are vested in the old ruling class, while others have been bestowed on 'new men' from outside the traditional *élite*. But

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52

there is convincing evidence to show that high social status still attaches to traditional ranks, though they may no longer command their former financial reward, rather than to wealth alone. Evidently this is only a transitional solution. In a society in which high status is so closely identified with a definite standard of living the separation of the two cannot be maintained indefinitely, at least not without some radical change in the whole concept of the *élite*. Theoretically, had their ranks not been divided by the appointment of some of their members to modern official posts, the Nupe aristocracy could have chosen the diehard solution of reinterpreting the whole concept of status and making it independent of economic advantages. As it is, the old *élite* must either win back its economic supremacy (which is impossible, though the attempts have never been given up), or else admit the new nobility of wealth into its ranks. We can observe this new conception taking shape. The respect for the traditional values is only strong enough to maintain an external continuity—the continuity of the symbols of status. And the 'new men' are the first to submit to this rule which allows them to legitimatize their position: they buy the titles which are the only passports to acceptance among the social *élite*. Here then, we have a final, and most modern, use of capital investment, for the sake of social advancement in its purely abstract and symbolic form.

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52

CHAPTER XXI

ECONOMICS AND SOCIAL STRUCTURE

ECONOMIC MOBILITY

565 556 558 THE lack of tangible data makes it impossible to formulate any theory about the extent to which economic mobility, i.e. movement between the strata, was a reality in pre-European days. We can only make a few statements based on social and historical facts the economic significance of which we can, with some certainty, assess. Economic betterment in every society depends on the possibility of increasing one's hold over resources and means of production. The Fulani conquest, and the exploitation of land which followed it, restricted, for one part of Nupe at least, mobility with regard to the main resource, land. The restriction could, however, be circumvented by means of political allegiance, i.e. by becoming the client of an influential landowner. There is also evidence that certain peasants and craftsmen have owned slaves and taken pawns, thus acquiring interest-bearing capital, and so rising above the average level of a peasant's or artisan's livelihood. In the ruling classes and among their dependants careers involving increased economic opportunities were the normal thing, whether they were expressed in a share in booty and slave-trade or in rewards to warriors and political followers 'for services rendered'. The reverse process, loss of economic opportunities, and in the extreme case the loss of all possessions, was no less marked. In the life of the peasant, such changes occurred in the course of wars and raids involving the destruction of homesteads, farms, and stores. The peasants in Nupe kingdom proper, though safe from slave-raids, were still exposed to similar attacks: punitive expeditions which, directed against a rebellious feudal lord, were fought on their land, or the visitation of armies which marched through and foraged from their farms. In the ruling group economic downfall could mean only one thing: political disgrace, often accompanied by confiscation of their property.

565 To-day the risks of war and raids have disappeared, together with the exploitation and one-sided source of income which they represented. Thus the new rule has to some extent levelled down the old economic inequalities. Clearly this levelling-down cannot have been equally welcome to every section of the population. Let me quote here the very frank and, in fact, typical statement of one of my most honest informants, an influential village elder of Mokwa. He admitted the great benefits of the present rule, thanks to which the *tdlaka*, the poor man, enjoys safety from wars, raids, and political abuses. But then he added (rather heatedly in fact): 'But you have turned us all into *tdlaka*.' This view, coming as it does not from a member of the ruling class but from a typical Nupe peasant, makes it necessary to review more closely the economic effects of the new order.[1] All our data tend to show that, although trade

[1] It incidentally supplies further evidence of the fact that a rise to superior economic position also occurred in the peasant classes.

462 The Nupe women have many occupations besides the ordinary household duties. Her obligations as a wife are to prepare the food, and bring firewood and water. They spin, weave, cook little cakes for the market, or practise hair-dressing, a lucrative profession, for a reputed coiffeuse receives 6d. to 1s. a head, according to the elaboration of the dressing, though no client presents herself more than once every moon. There are also women doctors, who attend both male and female patients, and receive the same fees that a man doctor would do. The Nupe women are above all things traders, and will often travel great distances on this behest. On these occasions they are accompanied
463 by their husbands, but the first wife is left at home by right of
439 her position. Usually she prefers so to remain; if she rebels, her husband asks her not to come on account of the loss of dignity, but if she persists he yields. In the early days of her married life, before there are other wives and dependants, she may trade in the neighbourhood three months after her wedding, and when
[562] there are two wives the elder will often take it in turns to go out with the younger. At no time may she leave the compound, however, without her husband's permission.

462 The women do a good deal of out-door work. They collect
562 the produce of all trees, except palm-oil and kola trees, the former
439 of which were a reserve of the Emirs, but are now divided between the occupier and the Chief of the town, and the latter are kept by the men. These they may sell for their own benefit, after first deducting in every case what will be required by the household throughout the year. Women also cultivate and sell ground-nuts and all root-crops, such as ochro, which do not require transplanting. Men do all transplanting and, therefore, own such crops as cassava, sweet potatoes, onions, etc., but it is the women who have the right to sell them, and as they usually keep a commission of 25 per cent. it is a valuable right. If, however, a man finds he is being given unusually high prices he rewards his wife with a liberal gift of cloth. It is the man who tends and owns all grain and, therefore, sells it for himself, but he is thought ill of if he does not first consult his wives as to the price he is to accept for it. They sow the corn and help to garner it after it is reaped, and each woman has charge of so many bundles, as to the sale of which she must be consulted. She expects some small present for her trouble.

566 When a household becomes rich, that is to say when their
556 property, if sold, would realise £20 to £40, a number of people
736 of both sexes ask leave to become their dependants. The master of the house will take no children without the consent of their parents, but a poor man will frequently desire his protection for them. They are then treated as children of the house, they are given food and clothes, and when the time for marriage comes the master of the house provides the necessary money.

4: Temple G-4 (no date) 1922

FF52 Nupe FF52

They are then turned out of the house, but are allowed to live in the vicinity, and continue to receive food and protection in return for whatever work is required of them. There are dependants of both sexes, and the unambitious often prefer to spend their whole lives in this manner. Slaves were treated in much the same manner, and children born in captivity were accounted free.

Motherhood is the great desire of the women, and every New Year the Mallams proclaim which will be the best months in that year for child-bearing. They have a strong belief in a medicine-man called "Soba," who lives in the bush at Lemo, between Bida and Zungeru, and who gives medicines to produce fertility. He is seldom to be found in person, but there are guardians in the bush who act as intermediaries.

When a child is born it is nourished on water, in which the leaves of the Aduruku tree (or the bark and leaves of some seven to ten different kinds of trees, the mixture is termed "dauri") have been boiled for three to seven days. It is poured into their mouths. This continues if the mother's milk is not good, for infants are never given the milk of any animal. After seven days the child is named, and both boys and girls are called after their father and after his father, though their first name be different. They are seldom called after their mother. The aboriginal custom is somewhat different, a girl being named on the eighth, a boy on the ninth day after birth. All the relatives assemble after dawn, certain roots are placed in a pot and beer poured over them. Some is poured as a libation on the ground, the head of the family then drinks some himself, conjuring the good spirit of medicine to protect the child's life, which he designates by name. The guests then consume two pots of beer, and a feast is held with the usual dancing, drumming and singing.

Boys are circumcised by the barber at the age of six or seven, after which they commence working on the farms. When they approach the age of puberty they leave their parents' house, and build themselves a separate hut.*

The eldest child, whether boy or girl, is hated by its parents; they will not look at it, and a large percentage die of neglect. They never call it anything individual, only "boy" or "girl," and the mother would refuse to feed it but that her husband's parents come and live with her for three months to see that she fulfils that duty. Sometimes they take the baby away with them and give it to some wet-nurse, but in no case is the first-born left with its parents after it is weaned. The grandfather always takes it. It has been asserted that the mother will not suckle her first-born child because her milk is unwholesome.

* Sapke and Mokwa.